

Rain slows Del. 1 opening

Newest stretch will not be ready until October

By CHIP GUY
Staff reporter

The newest stretch of Del. 1 will not open to motorists in mid-September, as projected earlier this summer.

The state Department of Transportation on Monday pushed back the opening of the newest portion of Del 1, designed to end congested trips to and from the beach. The 11-mile section will snake its way from the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal south to Odessa.

The southbound lanes were expected to open the week of Sept. 13, ahead of the last big NASCAR race weekend this year in Dover. They now will open Oct. 18. And the planned mid-October

opening of the northbound lanes has been delayed until at least Nov. 8, said D. Michael Williams, DelDOT spokesman.

Highway officials decided that new opening dates had to be set because of recent problems, including last week's heavy rains.

"We don't consider it a delay in opening," said Rob McCleary, the Del. 1 project manager. "We've said all along that we'd have the project done by Nov. 16. And we'll do our best to adhere to

that schedule."

In June, officials announced that construction of the \$98 million section of the highway was moving along quickly. Officials estimated

that parts of the highway would open two months ahead of schedule.

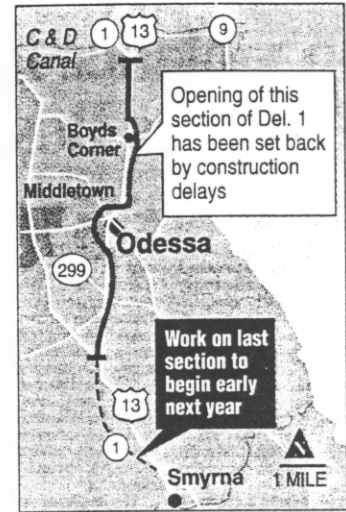
But Williams said recent rains, while good for parched crops and lawns, meant crews had to stop work.

Work that remains to be done includes further paving, ramp construction, bridge work, painting lines and erecting road signs.

Officials Monday said the change shouldn't pose any real problems, especially since the traditional beach season will end Labor Day.

The new road will be toll-free until Nov. 16, so motorists diverted from U.S. 13 onto Del. 1 because of construction can have free passage over the C&D Canal.

Del. 1 was conceived more than 20 years ago as a way to ease the increasing congestion found along U.S. 13 in the summer months.



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Traffic tie-ups at Boyd's Corner or in Odessa are not an uncommon sight on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in the summer.

This newest stretch is the second of three phases of the highway below the canal. Construction of the final phase — from south of Odessa to north of Smyrna — is expected to begin early next year.